No. 68

The REDEMPTION of Marie Gordon

THE TRAGIC STORY OF
WRONGED WOMANHOOD

Price 10¢

"Mother," he said slowly after a pause, "do you think that Margaret would [illegible] if I came to her?"

R. of M. G., No. 62.

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IN THEIR agitation, and in their unexpected joy and happiness at this meeting, Lillian never asked what had brought Gerard to her. God had heard her prayers and had brought him back to her. Nothing else in the world concerned her.

Gerard Mirabeau's soul was shaken to its very foundations.

Now he knew all that was in Margaret's heart; how she, also, had suffered in consequence of her all too great credulity and lack of forethought in that bitter hour in which she had rejected him.

A great tide of pity for her flooded his heart. He caught the girl to his breast and tried to turn her face towards him.

"My love, do not go on so. Have I not also been at fault? Did I not let you suffer all this time without giving you an opportunity to explain? And besides, I could not hate you if I would," he went on, with quick-coming breath, "and heaven knows I would not! To love you is the greates joy of my life, yet it hurt me.

"It hurt me in my soul that you should have misjudged me so. But I was sure, always, that the time would come, like this moment, dear, and I have been waiting, praying for it as for salvation!"

He softly kissed the great, lustrous eyes, till they closed as if in sleep.

Then he fiercely sought the rich red lips waiting soft and willing for his caresses, while her head dropped to his shoulder in half-unconscious surrender.

"Gerard," she said at last, you do not yet know why I acted and spoke so on that evening. Hear my confession, and you will understand."

"I want to hear nothing, know nothing Margaret, save that you love me," he cried.

"That you already know; but you must know, Gerard, of this other matter, or I will never be at ease with my conscious. Oh, I see the hand of Providence in having brought us together so unexpectedly, and I will not let this opportunity escape to make you see clearly what occurred."

She had dropped into a chair and Gerard stood beside her.

Margaret Wentworth seemed unable to summon enough courage to look up at him. With eyes cast to the floor, she related to him what she had overheard on that evening, and how she had been carried away by her impulse to speak to him as she did.

In vain Gerard tried to stop her, insisting that it made no difference, as she had never ceased to love him.

But he saw that the girl would find relief in self-abasement, and therefore said nothing further, allowing her to unburden her heart.

It seemed a necessity for Margaret to make this confession to Gerard, for the peace of her mind.

Her tale was simple in the extreme.

She made no attempt at extenuation, but all that she said rang true, with love purified by suffering.

When she had ended and at last turned her tearful eyes to him and pleaded, "Gerard, can you forgive me," he took both her hands and kissed them passionately.

"You dear, foolish child!" he exclaimed, "Will you believe that I love you and you alone? Do you trust in me now and have you faith in the conviction that you will find happiness with me?"

For answer Margaret, with a glad cry, her head in a whirl of joy, sprang to Gerard and he caught her to his heart.

The thought of having her, his heart's love, safe in his arms again, filled him with nameless bliss, and he could do nothing but cover her face with kisses and love the girl more deeply with each new breath he drew.

Her face was hidden on his breast, and he felt, rather than saw, the soft white arms moving tremblingly upwards till they closed about him in the dear embrace which meant for him, from henceforth, the faith, love and devotion of one true heart through all the sorrows and perplexities, as well as the joys and triumphs of life.

For as the poet Moore says,

"Love was to his impassioned soul,
Not as with others, a mere part
Of its existence, but the whole,
The very life-breath of his heart.

Mirabeau's character was too noble and manly to realize the strange turn his courtship had taken, which made him the receiver, not the giver, of the proposal.

All restraint between them had melted away, and now they had a great deal to say to each other besides the pasionate personalities in which they had been indulging.

Both felt as if ages and ages lay between the last time they had seen each other on that fatal evening, and this day.

Gerard spoke in affectionate terms of his mother and told Margaret that she would be received by her with open arms.

Meantime, it had flashed upon him how this meeting with Margaret had been brought about, and he did

not hesitate to impart it to her.

"That is just like her!" she cried, "she has a heart of gold and could not bear to be happy herself while I pined and mourned."

Gerard urged Margaret that she go home with him to his mother who was undoubtedly waiting anxiously for his return.

"You are right, dear," nodded Margaret. "But first let me call Lillian. She is our fairy god mother, and should be the first to know. Oh, how much I have to thank her for!"

She rang and told the maid to call Lillian.

As the latter entered the drawing room, Margaret threw her arms around her neck with a cry of mingled affection and joy.

"You are the angel who has brought us together," she cried. "Oh Lillian, how can I ever thank you! God bless you for what you have done for me."

"I wish you the happiness you deserve, Margaret," said Lillian simply.

She turned to Gerard and gave him her hand.

"You are a stranger to me no longer, Miss Crawford," he said smiling. "You have quite captured my mother's heart, not only because you wished to bring light and joy to us again, but for your own sake as well. Who knows whether we would have ever come together again but for you."

Ethel Sanders had been quiet longer than her animated, boisterous nature could comfortably endure.

When she heard of the engagement, she clapped her hands in delight and declared with an important manner, that she had done her part because she had so carefully guarded the entrance to the drawing room.

Gerard rewarded her with a kiss on her piquant little face.

In a little while the newly engaged couple left for the future bridegroom's house. On the steps, they were met by Victor Talbot who was just coming for Lillian.

He smiled knowingly as Margaret introduced Gerard to him, for now he could understand why Lillian had insisted so strongly upon Margaret accompanying them to Quebec.

Margaret's heart sank a little as they approached Gerard's home, but the latter took her hand and smiled encouragingly.

"Just look, dear," he cried. "there's my mother at the window waving to us. How anxiously she must have been waiting! She knows that without you, her son could never be completely happy."

In a few seconds they were in the house. Almost immediately Margaret felt herself in the embrace of the old lady who drew her to her breast.

"Welcome with all my heart, my daughter!" cried Mrs. Mirabeau. "How glad and happy I am that Gerard has found you again!"

With shy admiration Margaret looked up at the noble face of the old gentlewoman whose romantic life story she already knew.

Now she could thoroughly understand Gerard's devotion to her. Her very appearance commanded respect and admiration, and well did Mrs. Mirabeau know what to say to win the girl's timid heart.

In a short time it seemed to them both as if they had known each other for a long, long time, and not as though they had met for the first time to-day.

Beaming with joy, the young artist regarded the two who had so quickly understood one another, and who were dearest of everything on earth to him.

"You do not know what this day means to me, dear," Mrs. Mirabeau was saying in a gentle tone. "I

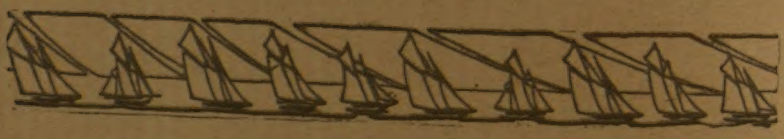
always wanted a daughter. And now, that my boy has brought you to me, I'll love you if you will let me."

Margaret kissed the sweet old lady.

"I want you to love me," she answered. "And I'll love you."

"Oh, what a happy family we shall be," Mrs. Mirabeau went on. "Just you, Gerard and I. No misunderstanding shall ever come between us."

"We won't let it," Margaret returned with a confident smile.



Chapter 223

WEDDING BELLS

T WAS quite late before Gerard took his bride-to-be home. He had taken her through his house and shown her all his work. She regarded him with a kind of awe and worship and could not comprehend that he loved a girl like herself.

"Mother," she had said to Mrs. Mirabeau shortly before leaving, "shall I be able to keep him happy, will I suffice for his fiery temperament? I am not beautiful, mother——"

"Yes, you are, in your eyes, my dear," interrupted the old lady with emotion. "You do not yet know Gerard well enough, I think. It is your good, pure heart which attracted him to you and held him when you seemed to turn from him, and although years have passed without your seeing each other.

"Believe me, Margaret, you have both withstood a terrible test of your love, and it has conquered. With God's help you will always be happy together."

On the way home, Margaret was very quiet. Her heart was filled to overflowing.

Gerard shared her feelings and understood her. To both it was still a dream that they should now be happy together.

When they reached Mrs. Sanders' house they parted and Margaret went up the stairs quickly.

Above in the corridor she met Lillian who put her arm about her waist and listened with bated breath to her story of what had passed during the afternoon.

"But what is all the laughter and shouting about inside," Margaret broke in. "Are there new guests, Lillian?"

Lillian shook her head.

"None that I know of, Margaret. There is a surprise in store for you, though, there has been another engagement in the house. All good things are three. Ethel has become engaged to Mr. Hugh Vandrift!"

"Impossible!" cried Margaret. "Not with the father?"

"Yes, Margaret, with he father," replied Lillian. "This afternoon, while you were away, he asked Mrs. Sanders for Ethel's hand, and naturally received her consent. Ethel was not consulted at all; her mother merely called her in and announced her decision. At first she seemed disgusted, but now she seems quite pleased.

"You ought to see how she shines in there. Mr. Vandrift has presented her with a beautiful ring and a wonderful necklace, and she is simply delighted with the jewels. Who knows, she may be perfectly happy with him."

"But what does his big son say?" asked Margaret curiously.

"He? I believe nothing can startle this British block of ice," answered Lillian laughing. "He seems to be quite satisfied, for I noticed that he pleasantly shook the hand of his future step-mother, who is not quite as old as he is."

Margaret, however, shook her head over the incident.

"Poor Ethel," she murmured, "I am afraid she is blinded by Mr. Vandrift's wealth. She is good and warm-hearted, but young and inexperienced. She thinks nothing of the future. It is not natural — this lively

young girl, and that sedate, heavy old man!"

"Extremes meet," laughed Lillian. "Come in and let us see the couple. You will see that nothing troubles them."

As Margaret stepped in, she was greeted with joyous acclamations.

All hurried forward with congratulations. Fraulein Gunther regarded her with a peculiar look. The girl whom her artistic sponsor had chosen for his wife, commanded her respect.

Mrs. Sanders tenderly embraced her niece. The worthy lady was in high fettle, now that the inmost wish of her heart was fulfilled.

Her daughter had made a wealthy match, and her feelings overflowed.

"I bless you in the name of your mother, my dear," she said. "May you be very, very happy!"

At last, Ethel introduced her intended. She really seemed very proud and happy as she did so, and Mr. Vandrift's phlegmatic face beamed with satisfaction as he looked at his pretty young fiancee.

Soon the company was again in a joyous uproar. Margaret could not very well withdraw, though she would have liked to do so.

In spite of the happiness with which she was filled, she was not in a mood to jest and laugh.

She would much rather have gone to her room and thought of him who had restored her to happiness, which even now did not seem real.

Then, too, she was anxious to write home to her mother and inform her of her engagement to Gerard.

Mrs. Wentworth already knew of her daughter's relations with the artist, but she had never learned why they had broken off.

Margaret was one of those reticent, reserved na-

tures who can bear their griefs alone, but melt when they receive pity or sympathy.

And, moreover, it was more than she could bring herself to do to confide in her mother, as the fault rested with her. Now, however, when happiness was hers again, she longed for her mother.

She felt that, after all, there was no one to whom she could speak of what was in her heart as to her own mother, and that no one would understand her as she would.

Lillian, and especially Victor Talbot, at last wearied of the merriment but could not do anything to break up the party, although they longed to be alone with each other.

When at last all was over, Ethel embraced her cousin warmly.

"Margaret," she asked, "don't you think my Hugh is just lovely? And how nice his son is to me! Just think, I will have jewels and automobiles! Hugh even has his own yacht. Oh, I shall have good times!"

"May you be truly happy, dear Ethel," said Margaret gravely.

A dull fear oppressed her mind that Ethel, now blinded by the glitter of wealth, might be unhappy in the end in spite of her riches.

Lillian and Victor Talbot were to be married. Their wedding-day had come. Clad in spotless white, with her luxuriant hair braided and twined with white flowers, the young girl stood thoughtfully beside her window, looking out into the street below.

Her hands were tightly over her heart, and on one slender finger blazed a costly diamond, the seal of her betrothal.

She was very pale; now and then her lips quivered, and her lashes were wet with tears. Yet this was her wedding-day!

How strangely and differently things had come about! How different to what she had pictured her wedding would be in her girlish dreams!

She was a fugitive in a strange land and was not to wed her lover in the old church where her mother had been united to her father.

There was no mother to entwine the bridal wreath in her hair, and no father's blessing followed her steps to the altar. In a measure she was stealing her happiness.

Oh, if her father could have but known how things would go, how differently he would have arranged for the future of his only child!

She dreaded to think of the struggles with her stepmother that were still before her when she returned as Victor's wife. But she found comfort in that very thought. She no longer stood alone, for her lover would be forever at her side—a strong arm would protect her.

Whatever might happen, he was hers and she was his!

As Victor Talbot came to her room, her brow was unclouded, and her eyes shone with such boundless love for him, that his own grave face brightened.

Tenderly, he drew his sweetheart to his breast. In this hour which would unite her to him at the altar he forgot the cloud which rested on his life like a curse, the shadow of a crime.

There were but two witnesses to their quiet marriage; Gerard Mirabeau and Margaret Wentworth

The wealthy heiress of the Crawford estates walked to the altar attired in her simple little white gown. She had no thought for ostentation and outward display.

Her inward happiness shone from her eyes as, in the solemn hush, she answered "yes" and laid her hand in her husband's to bind their covenant for life.

The wedding of the young pair was celebrated at Mrs. Sander's house.

The little company gathered in the dining room to a merry dinner. The ladies in their bright-colored gowns, the room and tables richly adorned with flowers, made a very pretty picture.

Gerard's mother was also present. Mr. Vandrift's English stolidity actually changed into enthusiasm at the sight of his gay young fiance.

"Do you know," Ethel said as Lillian embraced her on her return from the church, "your marriage is so romantic. I always wished for something like that, but now I think differently.

"I made Hugh promise to give a big wedding in London. He is rich—why shouldn't we have it? We'll have some style, I can tell you! Oh, it is great to know you are rich and have money for everything."

"Do you really think that happiness depends only on money, Ethel?" rejoined Lillian gravely. "I hope that you may never realize that true happiness depends only upon the satisfaction of the heart."

Ethel was startled for a moment, but soon her hearty laugh rang through the room.

"Oh, you cannot frighten me, Mrs. Talbot," she said. "You will see how happy I shall be. Hugh says I can have everything I want."

With a laugh, she turned on her heel, and mingled with the guests.

The newly married couple passed a most enjoyable evening. Of the two Lillian was apparently the happiest. Victor Talbot was now her husband in the sight of God and the world. Nothing else mattered.

But Talbot's features, when in repose, showed an expression of anxiety. It was easily discernible that he had some secret worry. And he did.

In the midst of this merriment his thoughts were busy with the immediate future. They could not stay in Quebec forever.

After a short honeymoon trip he expected to take his lovely young bride back to his home. What kind of a reception would they receive? Would the neighbors still point their fingers at him with suspicion?

His teeth set as he recalled the many slights and insults he had been compelled to endure because of his unfortunate arrest and trial for the murder of Roger Hawkins.

If this sort of thing was to be kept up, Lillian was bound to feel the sting. And his soul rebelled at the thought of her suffering with him.

The next few days were busy ones. Margaret Wentworth and Gerard Mirabeau were making preparations for an early marriage.

Ethel Sanders and Mr. Vandrift, the old Englishman, were also looking forward to their wedding. In the midsts of all this hustle and bustle, Victor Talbot and his bride quietly slipped away to a mountain retreat.

Chapter 223

THE DRUNKARD

ULIA CAREY, or rather Olive Carrel, as she insisted upon being called, had indeed become a true follower of the lowly Nazarene. Her whole life was devoted to the alleviation of humanity in distress. No task was too hard or too disagreeable for her. She did her best to heal sick souls as well as sick bodies.

She had been treated to a tremendous surprise the day she visited Oak Manor and found that Miss Desmond, the governess, was none other than her own sister Marie. But now, since the latter had left for the South with the children, she gave all of her attention to Mrs. Knight.

Dr. Van Buren was as keenly interested in the case of Ellen Knight as Olive Carrel was. He not only treated her without charge, but also furnished the money for medicine and other things needed in the house.

Thanks to his great kindness and the splendid nursing of Olive Carrel, Mrs. Knight was able to sit up a few hours each day.

The pallor of her lovely features was slowly giving away to a faint pink. But the expression of worry would not leave her eyes.

She saw very little of her husband. His utter indifference regarding her condition was a source of constant grief.

Olive Carrel did her best to soothe the unhappy young woman. Through sheer force of personality she

had succeeded in removing John Knight's objection to her being in his home.

And Olive did more than that. She did not mince words with the man, but told him straight from the shoulder that it was his duty to earn enough money to support his wife.

She was unwilling to continually accept money from Dr. Van Buren to buy medicine and food.

Whenever she approached Knight and asked him for money, she always got the same answer.

"I am broke," he would say with an insolent grin.

The patient was being kept in ignorance of the true state of affairs.

Ellen Knight had a great deal of pride, and it would have humiliated her tremendously to know that she had become an object of charity.

One day, Knight was alone with his wife in the sick room. Pale and weak, she lay in an arm chair and looked up anxiously as he spoke.

"Well, how long will this mess keep up?" he growled. "I guess you could live like this forever, your hands in your lap and a sniveling nurse waiting on you. She seems just as crazy about you as your mother, who petted you like a baby."

A flush of anger came over Ellen's pale cheeks.

"You should be ashamed to speak that way of my mother from whom you received nothing but good," she answered indignantly. "How you have wronged her! If she knew what I have been through she would turn in her grave with sorrow."

"Oh, indeed," he sneered, "and what have you to complain of? I think this Dr. Van Buren is spending enough for your comfort. Why should you worry?"

Trembling in every limb, the convalescent sprang up.

"That is a lie!" she cried angrily. "I have accepted nothing from Dr. Van Buren, not a penny!"

"No?" he jeered. "Just ask your nurse who gives her the money for your fine food and your medicines. I haven't given her a cent in two weeks; I'm broke. I have seen the doctor put money into her hand outside of the door."

Ellen sank back weakly into the arm-chair. Her face was deathly pale and tears stood in her eyes.

"I did not know it," she wailed. "I never imagined it or I would never have accepted it, but I will positively pay him back. I have been promised a place at Oak Manor, and as soon as I am well, I will go there. You will not have to support me any longer, and I will pay him back from my wages."

Knight listened to her open-mouthed. He did not know whether to rejoice at her energy, or to be angry over it.

He was glad to be free of her, but his pride was wounded and he fretted that she should so plainly show how unnecessary he was to her existence.

"Is that so?" he scoffed. "Great idea! I suppose you will take your angel of mercy along so that she can keep on cuddling you."

At this moment, Olive Carrel returned to the sick-room. At a glance she saw that there had been a scene between the two. With great concern she ran to her patient who still needed the greatest care.

The brutal fellow could spoil all that had been accomplished through careful nursing.

"Oh Miss Carrel," cried Ellen, raising her tearful eyes to her, "why have you not told me that Dr. Van Buren is paying for everything?"

Knight left the room, closing the door behind him so violently that Ellen shrank in fright. The nurse put

her arm about her consolingly.

"Were we to let you suffer?" she said gently. "What else was there to do? Dr. Van Buren is a wealthy man, and he is glad to do what he can."

A deep flush spread over the countenance of the young woman.

"No, no," she murmured agitatedly, "I cannot accept it. Oh, what a poor, weak creature I am, and John is strong and could make a living for us both, and will not!"

"You must not be so sensitive, Mrs. Knight," said the nurse. "Dr. Van Buren helps willingly wherever he can."

"Yes, he is noble and good," murmured Ellen almost inaudibly.

Then she seemed to gather herself and sat up erect.

"Very well, then, I see that I must accept his assistance," she nodded, "but I do so under the condition that I must be allowed to repay him from what I will earn."

Olive Carrel nodded smilingly to quiet her.

"Will you tell Dr. Van Buren? How long will it be before I can go to work?" asked Ellen.

"Well, about two weeks if you keep on this way," the nurse answered.

"Two weeks more," sighed Ellen. "Oh, if I could get up now. I am just aching to do something again. I seem so superfluous in the world, lying here."

When Dr. Van Buren came later in the day, Ellen Knight was flushed with embarrassment, and she could hardly raise her eyes to her benefactor.

The doctor stayed longer than usual. His heart seemed wonderfully light, and he felt a peculiar delight when his talk brought a smile to his patient's pale lips.

The young woman had won his heart. He knew her sufferings and pitied the poor young creature whose life was being so brutally wrecked by her husband.

He had secretly collected information about him and there was but little to his credit in what he had learned.

In his native town, the shameless rascal had defrauded many working-men of their hard-earned money. By his imposing appearance and important manner, he had deceived these people into believing he stood well until the crash suddenly came and they lost all.

This, however, did not affect Knight at all. He did not concern himself in the least about the poverty and misery he had brought into many a little home.

Why were they so foolish? Nobody compelled them to trust him. The blockheads, as he called them, it was their own fault if they lost their money.

Knight was of the kind, who, once started on a downward path, could not halt, but continued to fall lower and lower into the slough of despondency.

He could not rouse himself to turn over a new leaf and begin a new life.

He lounged about saloons, gambled, and engaged in shady transactions which offered a chance to turn a penny.

But he had no desire for downright, honest work. In this way he eked out a miserable existence.

He began to gamble daily, and as he found that the cards did not always favor him, he occasionally corrected fortune by manipulating the past boards.

Of all this, his wife had no suspicion. At first she asked him what he was doing, but his replies were so rough that she did not dare to ask him again.

When Dr. Van Buren had found this out, he took care that neither she nor Olive Carrel should know of it.

At last Ellen Knight had recovered so far that the nurse's services could be dispensed with, and she departed on a new mission of mercy. The two women parted reluctantly. They had formed a sincere attachment for each other.

Ellen now took up her housekeeping again and at the same time made the necessary preparations to assume the place at Oak Manor which would soon be vacant.

The loneliness and seclusion in which she now found herself were hard to bear. Not only did she have no confidant about her, but she was again exposed to her husband's brutality.

Chapter 224

AN ACCIDENT

WHILE Olive Carrel was there, Knight had restrained himself when he came home, but now she feared that his coarseness would reappear and she was filled with dread. She longed for the hour in which she would be called to take up the promised position.

One day Knight came home suddenly at noon. Something he had not done in a very long while.

Throwing himself in a chair and stretching out his legs, he remarked jeeringly:

"Thank God that praying hypocrite is gone," he cried. "It's about time. Well, what have you to eat? Trot it out!"

He reeked with liquor. Poor Ellen was sickened by the odor as she passed him. She felt nothing for him but contempt.

In silence she put before him the meal she had prepared for herself, but it did not suit him. He wanted to know why there was nothing better.

Ellen's patience was exhausted. She felt that she would be unworthy of herself to endure such treatment longer. Olive Carrel had thoroughly awakened her pride and self-respect.

"I do not understand you," she replied indignantly. "You complain about food, but what have you done in months for the support of the household?"

As though he had been waiting for this, he sprang up angrily, throwing the spoon which he held in his hand to the floor.

"This is what you learned from the nurse, eh?" he cried enraged, going toward her with clenched hands. "You had better forget what she told you. If you dare to speak that way to me again, I——"

She cried aloud as he roughly took her by the arm.

"Let me go!" she cried, beside herself. "I will not let you mistreat me again. You have robbed me of everything; you have made a beggar of me and you have ruined my health, but now I have enough. You can go no further! I will bear your brutality no longer, but will go my own way!"

At first he stared at her open-mouthed. He was unprepared for such firmness and independence.

Then his rage broke out anew. It was the first time that the unhappy woman had reproached him, and he was almost out of his mind.

"Do you dare to tell me that?" he burst out, throwing himself forward like a maniac. I'll teach you!"

He had raised his hand threateningly when suddenly the door opened, and Dr. Van Buren stood on the threshold.

Ellen's face colored a deep red. She was less pained by the violence her husband had offered, than by the fact that the doctor was a witness of it.

With a curse, Knight dropped his arm to his side.

Dr. Van Buren already stood before him, fire in his eyes.

"Man—are you mad?" he exclaimed. "How dare you touch your wife, barely out of a sick bed? Is there no spark of humanity in you? Are you a beast?"

For a moment, Knight stood silent, abased. The next instant, however, he cried coarsely:

"You have nothing to say here, do you understand? This is my house. I am the boss here! You had

better get out quick, or you will regret it!"

Dr. Van Buren regarded him from head to foot with measureless contempt.

Without noticing him further, he turned to the young woman who had stepped aside, struggling with her tears.

While he quietly spoke to her, Knight looked over at the two with fearful eyes. He seemed undecided what to do.

Suddenly he reached for his hat, and a loud slam of the door indicated that he was gone.

"Can you really be hurt, Mrs. Knight, at what this man may say to you?" said the doctor, half in sympathy and half in remonstrance. "You stand so high above him that he cannot insult you.

"This cannot go on," he added decisively, "if you yourself do not wish to go to rack and ruin. You must part from him forever, or he will never leave you in peace."

Sobbing, Ellen nodded.

She could not tell him how she burned with shame; a thousand times rather could she have borne her husband's violence than that the doctor should have seen her in this situation.

Dr. Van Buren did not leave the home of the Knights until he saw that Ellen had become more quiet, and after she had promised him to take steps for a separation.

On his way home, the image of lovely Ellen Knight was unceasingly before his eyes.

He knew now that it was not only pity and friendship which he had hitherto thought had occupied his mind with her.

It was a far deeper feeling which had become firmly rooted in his heart, and one which he could not

eradicate.

The thought that she was still in the power of that villain, tortured him. The thought that she was exposed to his violence almost maddened him.

But what could he do? What right had he to intrude in their affairs?

Similar thoughts occupied Ellen as she went about her work in her little home. She dreaded her husband's return. She was resolved that she would not allow him to touch her.

Even if it were late at night, she would fly from the house. Olive Carrel, the charity nurse, she felt, would always provide her with a refuge.

The nearer night approached, the greater was her anxiety. Although she still had spells of weakness, she determined to report at Oak Manor in the morning and ask whether she could not enter into service at once, if only to be away from her brutal husband.

Hour after hour passed, but Knight did not return.

Ellen retired to a room on the upper floor of which she could bolt the door, for in no case would she venture to spend the night in a room which he could enter.

She felt her life was not safe with him. But she could not sleep. Anxiously she listened for his footsteps.

How interminable such a night is! She heard the clock strike each hour, but her husband did not return. Perhaps he would never come back again. But no, he would have tried to turn the household goods into money.

At last morning broke. With weary eyes, Ellen rose from her bed.

She had found no rest and it was useless to lie abed. She was oppressed as if with a foreboding of coming evil.

Mechanically, she went about the housework, fearsomely listening for her husband's footsteps. She even wished now that he would come home, for she did not want to leave secretly.

What little furniture still remained belonged to her and she intended to ask permission to take it to Oak Manor. But if her husband did not come home, she could not leave the house.

Her disturbance increased momentarily. To occupy herself, she began to pack what she intended to take with her, but she was so distracted that often she took up the wrong things.

At about ten o'clock, she heard sounds outside, but it was not her husband who was approaching.

Ellen's heart began to beat wildly. She expected —she knew not what! She hastened to the door and opened it.

She shrank back in mortal fright as she saw two strangers before her.

Before she could ask a question, they bent down and raised a stretcher which they had rested on the ground before the door.

"Merciful God! What has happened?" she cried. "My husband——"

"He has had a bad fall," replied one of the men. "He must have stumbled on his way home in the night. We found him lying in a ditch, senseless, half an hour ago."

"A doctor will be here soon," added the other man. "We have already sent for one."

Ellen was speechless from fright and weakness: she trembled all over. The poor woman had not convalesced sufficiently for such excitement.

The men raised the stretcher and brought the unfortunate into the living room.

Quickly Ellen hastened to the bed room, arranged the bed and bade the men lay her unconscious husband on it.

As she drew away the handkerchief with which they had covered the face of the injured man, she shrieked aloud and sank back swooning.

Just in time Dr. Van Buren came in. He caught the sinking woman and tenderly placed her into an arm chair, speaking to her gently. He lost no time, however, in going to the injured man to examine him.

It was a long time before he again came to Ellen, who looked up to him anxiously.

"He must have been intoxicated when he fell," he said. "Apparently his head struck a rock, and I am afraid he has a fracture of the skull. He came back to consciousness for a few minutes, but he is senseless again. It is very likely that his brain is injured.

"He seems to have hardly any bodily injuries, but I cannot be positive on that point now. It would be best to have him taken to the city hospital, but the question is if it would not be dangerous to move him now."

"No, doctor, I cannot allow him to be taken away —he must stay here," interrupted the young woman firmly.

A shade of surprise showed in Dr. Van Buren's face at the first energetic tone he had heard her utter.

"That is all very well, but who is to nurse him?" he replied. "All the charity nurses are very busy now. There is diphtheria in the village and I cannot spare one just now."

Ellen raised her pale face with determination.

"I do not need one. It is unnecessary for her to come. I will nurse my husband myself," she returned. "Don't look at me so surprised. I know what you think, but now that he is helpless it is my duty to stay with

him."

"But you yourself are hardly well as yet," he objected strenuously.

"Even so," she said. "But I have something to do, it will not hurt me. It would be a disgrace if I were to leave him now in his misfortune. As his wife, I must stay with him."

Dr. Van Buren turned aside. He had not counted upon such generosity of soul.

He was not prepared for such unselfishness, even in this woman, and he contrasted her conduct with that of the man who, only yesterday, had raised his hand against her.

Would it not be well to try again to persuade her otherwise? He feared that her strength would be insufficient. After all, he could bring a nurse to take care of Knight until his wife would consent to his removal to the hospital.

But a glance at the young woman told him that she could not be persuaded; that she was firmly resolved to stay.

His voice quivered a little as he now offered his hand and pressed hers.

"Very well then," he said, "do what you think is your duty. I will send whatever you may need for your husband."

He had left the room and the sound of his footsteps had died away, but Ellen still continued to look at the door through which he had departed.

Suddenly two tears rolled from her eyelashes.

With a hasty motion, as though she had caught herself in an offense, she put her handkerchief to her eyes and went to her husband's bedside.

She was trying vainly to deny to herself that she admired the handsome physician more than she had ad-

mired any other man. And she did more than that—she loved him!

As she sat there watching the quiet figure lying before her, a strange feeling entered her heart.

What if her husband were to die from the injuries he had received? She would be a widow and free to marry again. Dr. Van Buren had shown far more than just ordinary interest in her.

His deep sympathy had made his voice tremble when he spoke to her. But was it only sympathy? Ellen Knight hid her blushing face in her hands.

Chapter 225

ALICE'S REVENGE

BEFORE Philip Gordon left the copper mines in Montana, he had exacted the promise from Miss Desmond that she would keep him informed about everything that happened at Oak Manor. He made it emphatic that the care of his two children was in her hands.

He had insisted that she must report to him at least once a week what progress they were making in their studies, behavior and physical welfare.

Marie had done this faithfully, although it was a hard thing to address the man she loved so dearly as "Mr. Gordon," or just "Dear Sir." It was also a difficult task to change her handwriting.

It was only natural that she should inform him of the return of Alice, and that she had been asked to leave Oak Manor.

She wrote him that she was taking the children and Annie with her to the home of an old friend, and that after a short stay there, she would take them South for the winter.

But Marie left behind a clue to her movements. One of the maids overheard her telling Annie that they were going first to the home of Mr. Shields. And this maid happened to be one of the second Mrs. Gordon's paid spies.

This was unfortunate, for it gave Alice the desired opportunity for revenge.

Mr. Shields was not a little surprised when Marie arrived with the children and Annie.

He at once ordered the servants to make them comfortable, then he drew the Gordon governess into his study for a private conversation.

Marie told him why she had left Oak Manor in all frankness.

"I couldn't do anything else," she ended with a bitter expression about her sensitive mouth. "Alice made it very plain that she was still the mistress of the house, and that she would not tolerate me. You see, there was nothing else to be done. I had to go."

The old lawyer nodded reflectively.

"Yes, that is true," he admitted slowly. "But I am afraid you did an unwise thing in taking the children with you."

"Why?" Marie inquired, fear tugging at her mother heart.

"The consequences of your rash act may be very unpleasant," he replied.

"Why, there was nothing rash about it," she protested. "I had spoken to Phil about taking the children South with me, and he not only gave his consent, but he also urged me to do so."

"Was there any particular time set for your departure?" Mr. Shields inquired.

"No. I was to use my own judgement in the matter," was the response. "So when Alice demanded that I leave Oak Manor at once, I got the children ready and left.

"You don't think for a moment that I would leave them in the hands of that woman after——"

"Well, let us hope for the best," the attorney interrupted. "Everything may be alright."

But Marie was not satisfied with this. She wanted to know what she had to fear, and from what source she might expect trouble.

Mr. Shields, determined not to frighten her unnecessarily, was evasive in his answers.

"There is no need of being alarmed, my dear," he smiled. "Only don't leave this State with the children for a few days."

That ended the conversation, and Marie, still vaguely troubled, went to join the children upstairs. It was truly pathetic the way the youngsters clung to her.

It was as if they had an intuition that she was their own mother instead of a mere governess.

The following day brought a surprise. Mr. Shields was called out of the city on account of some litigation which involved a firm he represented in legal matters.

He was obliged to appear in the court of a small southern Illinois town, but expected to be back in three days at the most.

However, before he left, he cautioned Marie to stay indoors with the children.

His idea was to keep the fact that the Gordon governess and the children were staying at his house from Alice.

Mr. Shields knew what the second Mrs. Gordon was capable of.

She was the type of a woman who stops at nothing short of actual murder in order to be revenged upon anyone she hated.

And she hated Marie Desmond with all the vindictiveness of a fiend.

Marie promised that she would heed his advise, and did not leave the Shields residence at any time.

It was nearly noon when the sharp ring of the bell brought one of the servants to the door on the run. Mr. Shields was wanted.

Continued in next number

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